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Sixty-third year

Identical letters dated 7 August 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit the annexed statement made by the President of Georgia on 7 August 2008 regarding the latest developments in the Tskhinvali region, Georgia.

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 16, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Irakli **Alasania**
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the identical letters dated 7 August 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Special address of the President of Georgia, Mikheil Saakashvili

My dear fellow citizens!

I would like to address South Ossetia, I want to address all of Georgian society, all of our multi-ethnic Georgian society. I want to address ethnic Georgians and ethnic Ossetians, ethnic Russians and ethnic Jews, living in the conflict zone — all citizens of our country, regardless of their ethnicity.

My dear fellow citizens!

The situation in and around Tskhinvali has just worsened. In recent days, the permanent provocations, violations, murders and other offences to which we have become accustomed now have escalated dangerously and threaten the peace.

I myself do not understand why the separatists became so aggressive exactly at this time. First, they attacked several times the Head of the Provisional Administration of South Ossetia, Dimitry Sanakoev, who was formerly one of the separatist leaders and who opted for peace. Then, they began attacking Georgian police, peacekeeping posts and mobile patrols. During the last few days, they undertook large-scale attacks and are continuing to attack peaceful civilians in villages.

Sniper assaults on civilians in Georgian villages are still under way. Even at this moment, as I speak to you, intensive fire is coming from artillery, tanks, and other weapons, such as mortars and grenade launchers, that have been illegally deployed in the conflict zone.

We have been in constant contact with the leadership of the local Russian peacekeeping forces.

Several hours ago, they told us that they had completely lost control over the actions of the separatists.

I dispatched to Tskhinvali Mr. Temur Iakobashvili — the State Minister for Reintegration and the Special Representative of the President in the negotiating process — in order to conduct direct talks regarding a ceasefire.

The separatists refused to accept him and sent him back from the conflict zone without any results.

We are in constant contact with the leadership of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry tells us Russia is trying to stop the separatists from engaging in armed action, but without any success.

I would like to directly address those people who are at this moment shooting peaceful civilians and Georgian police forces.

You have been shooting during the last several days and especially in the last several hours.

I want to declare with full responsibility and confess that several hours ago, in my capacity as Commander in Chief of Georgia, I issued a very painful order directing all Georgian police forces and other units under our control not to return fire, even if they face intensive bombing.

I did this very deliberately.

However, I would like to state that in the hours since, during which time our forces and civilians have fallen victim — there are many casualties and many wounded, many houses have been destroyed and damaged — I did this deliberately in order to have the possibility to stand before you and call for an immediate ceasefire and immediate negotiations.

I continue to support the peace plan for South Ossetia that I introduced three years ago, a plan that has been developed over the course of many years. It includes practically unrestricted autonomy and local governance for South Ossetia, special safeguards for the human rights of every ethnic Ossetian, autonomy under international guarantees and an autonomous structure created according to European Union standards.

I am proposing that the Russian Federation act as a guarantor of South Ossetian autonomy within Georgia. I act with full responsibility, so that Russia, Georgia, and European countries can participate in the peacekeeping process. The local population must feel that they are defended by the international community, by people who deserve their trust.

I want to say that, despite the fact that many people have been killed and robbed, have had their possessions absolutely destroyed, we are offering full amnesty to everyone who has committed such criminal acts punishable under Georgian law, if they immediately cease fire. I am willing to take even such a consequential step. The Georgian Government is ready to forgive the crimes committed in recent years in order to secure peace, to continue the peacekeeping process and negotiations.

We offer all of you partnership and friendship, despite your violations against the Georgian State and the local population, no matter what acts you committed, acts that are punishable under Georgian and international laws. Because peace is of greater value, more vital than anything else. We are ready for any sort of agreement in the interest of peace.

But I once again would like to address you.

My dear people, my dear fellow citizens!

I love Ossetians as a President and as an ordinary citizen of this country.

I admire and respect Ossetian history and culture.

Every ethnic Ossetian has been an inseparable part of Georgian history for centuries.

We are proud of you and our unity. Georgia is strong for its diversity. Georgia has never been and will never be a mono-ethnic country. Georgia belongs to all of us regardless of our ethnicity.

Let's take care of our country together. Let's together avoid the violence. Let's work together for a better future. Let's forget everything negative that has happened in the past and let's together think about our common future.

I would like to address the international community. Nobody should try to present the Georgian Government as a supporter of any kind of violence. For so many days, we have been reaching out to our partners — today we have spoken to several world leaders — to help us stop the escalation of violence. We ask that you help us conduct direct negotiations, to guarantee the autonomous status of South Ossetia and to internationalize the peace process. We also ask for your assistance in holding a more results-oriented dialogue.

We are doing everything to avoid escalation of the violence.

I would like to address the Russian Federation as well.

Georgia is a natural ally of Russia.

Any President of Georgia — and myself above all, since I know well what Russia means for Georgia — will always be committed to good relations with Russia, assuming that Russia respects the territorial integrity of Georgia, the sovereignty of Georgia and the inviolability of the State borders of Georgia.

In recent years, South Ossetia, for all intents and purposes, is directly administered by the Russian Federation.

There are ministers in the separatist government in Tskhinvali, for instance, who are also officials of the Russian Government and who have been sent to South Ossetia on mission.

I request from Russia and the separatists to pull these ministers out; they have nothing to do in South Ossetia; they do not contribute to the historical friendship between Georgians and South Ossetians. To the contrary: they hamper the restoration of our traditional allied relations.

We need true mediators, and we offer the Russian Federation an important role in resolving this conflict.

We can accomplish many things together. But for now, we must return to the situation as it stands today.

Georgia is undertaking an immediate, unilateral ceasefire. We do not have the will to respond to violence with yet more violence.

We have been tolerating this for so many years. We have not responded to so many provocations throughout the years, to countless violations. No other State would have shown such restraint. Please, do not test the Georgian State's patience. Because this is your country, which is willing to defend each of you.

Let's stop this spiral of violence. I address everyone: let's do everything to stop the escalation — today, tomorrow, or the day after — and return to the negotiating table. Let's use every possible format — direct, multilateral and other formats — to overcome this absolutely critical situation, to come out of this unacceptable deadlock in which we all find ourselves.

My dear people!

I rely on your wisdom, on your historical experience, that lies in our shared past and in our genes.

This is the Caucasus, where violence harms everyone.

Let's give peace and dialogue a chance.

I really believe in you!